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# STUDENT ESSAY

## COMMUNICATING AMERICA'S DEFENSE NEEDS

BY

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USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER

COMMUNICATING AMERICA'S DEFENSE NEEDS

INDIVIDUAL ESSAY

by

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US Army War College  
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ABSTRACT

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT . . . . .	ii
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
THE NEED FOR PUBLIC SUPPORT . . . . .	2
THE CHALLENGE . . . . .	4
PUBLIC CONFUSION . . . . .	6
DISPELLING MISUNDERSTANDING . . . . .	13
HOW TO PROCEED: A POSSIBLE APPROACH . . . . .	15
APPENDIX A: MOST COMMONLY ENCOUNTERED QUESTIONS . . . . .	24
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	37

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## INTRODUCTION

The nation's continued strength and survival are dependent upon the support of its citizens. The extent of that support is in turn a product of clear and timely public understanding of defense issues. Such understanding is now, and has frequently been, undercut by confusion resulting from conflicting news coverage and political rhetoric. Effective Department of Defense (DOD) articulation of defense needs at the public grassroots level is essential if we are to prevent damage to current security programs and remain responsive to future security threats.

Public understanding can be crucial for long-range defense programs, acquisition of specific high cost weapon systems and galvanizing political support. In that regard, our citizens are generally unfamiliar with specific near- and long-term security risks incurred through unresponsiveness to defense needs, the actual extent of the Soviet threat and the small amount of our Gross National Product (GNP) actually applied to national defense. Further, polls and surveys of our populace have demonstrated that public support increases as national problems and needs have been credibly explained.

As manager of the nation's defense program, the Department of Defense should assume overall responsibility for ensuring effective explanation of national security needs to the American public. Available capabilities and techniques could be more fully utilized for this purpose. Further, this could be accomplished through increased direct DOD contact with the public operating within the existing framework of established public relations policies and procedures.

## THE NEED FOR PUBLIC SUPPORT

Whatever the number and effectiveness of weapons we amass, they will not secure our Republic unless we have the national will to defend our values and our interests. . . . We cannot expect the old factionalism to disappear unless we muster new ideas around which people can unite.<sup>1</sup>

Freedom is what our country is truly about but, there is a price; eternal vigilance. The commitment of our FOUNDING FATHERS to freedom and just peace resulted in the nation's birth and purpose, however, the peace and freedom we enjoy is not an automatic birthright of its citizens. These precious assets must be continually protected against all forms of erosion and attack in a world community divided by competing ideologies, differing values and conflicting standards of conduct—a world simultaneously endangered by weapons of the most destructive potential imaginable.

These are the facts which will probably not change for many years. We cannot pretend they do not exist, ignore their presence or make them go away through acts of pacifism or accommodation. The foundation of peace with freedom consists primarily of our country's firm resolve not to lose either as well as the military means to protect both.

We must never permit our national security to deteriorate to the extent that one day we could be faced with the choice between capitulation to totalitarianism or nuclear devastation. If we make our defense sufficiently strong to deter both, we will never be presented with such a choice. There is no alternative because anything less puts both our peace and freedom at risk.<sup>2</sup>

The concept of peace with freedom upon which our nation was founded, has grown and currently exists, is clearly in the way of established Soviet ideology and goals. We can therefore expect to be continually challenged and pressured as the Soviets relentlessly strive for hegemonistic expansion. But to meet those challenges and credibly convey intent to use military force, if



necessary, in defense of national freedom and interests, requires firm united public support.

From a societal aspect, the willingness and courage of our people to take risks and endure suffering in pursuit of national goals has become a principal factor in determining US strategic military requirements and setting limits on US policy worldwide. This means that we will be directly threatened with annihilation if we pursue policies in conflict with the Soviet Union and the American populace has become our national command authority in any crisis other than a surprise strategic attack. If time permitted public debate in such instances, it is doubtful whether a consensus could be achieved on an adequate or appropriate response to a Soviet nuclear confrontation or conflict, or even support for vigorous conventional warfare were escalation to nuclear war to be a possibility.<sup>3</sup>

In today's environment, the mere threat of war has become as decisive as military victory or defeat in war itself and fear of nuclear devastation can so disarm a democracy that national objectives become subverted--that is, unless the people are well informed. The nation's continued strength and survival are dependent upon the support of its citizens. The extent of that support is in turn a product of clear and timely public understanding of defense issues. Such understanding is now, and has frequently been, undercut by confusion resulting from conflicting news coverage and political rhetoric. Effective articulation of defense needs at the public grassroots level is essential if we are to prevent irreversible damage to current defense programs and remain responsive to future security threats.

There is no doubt that Americans would again, as they have previously, rise to the call for national defense if a dramatically provocative event aroused them and if it allowed time for effective security responses. The real issue for American national-security planners, therefore, is how to

anticipate and prepare for occasions in which security appears to be threatened, although there is no concurrent catalytic event to generate much sustained public support, especially for deterrence of aggression during periods of peace.<sup>4</sup>

Further, an adequate and appropriate level of deterrence however, has a price—one that cannot be paid with required constancy over the long-term without full public support. Demands on government services have long since outstripped the willingness of the people to pay taxes to cover the ensuing costs. This and other circumstances point to the continuation of a sizable federal deficit for the near future. Occasional closely spaced crises (such as events in Iran, Afghanistan and Poland) result in general concern and temporary pressures to increase defense spending however, aside from such short-term bursts of support, overall steady pressure to reduce defense spending will probably continue. What is needed (and what we are neglecting to effectively do), is to forge a consensus behind defense spending through improved articulation and enhanced appreciation of the threat and what the nation as a whole can afford.<sup>5</sup>

#### THE CHALLENGE

We are indeed the richest nation on earth and also one of the most blessed—in terms of freedom, resources, climate, bright and innovative people, friendly neighbors and sturdy allies. Historically, we have also been blessed with greater periods of peace than most nations. As a consequence, we have been slow to recognize threats to our freedom and security. Historically, we could afford that. Today we cannot. The threat is real and it is now. To meet it, we need only match our resources with our resolve. And if we do that, together with our allies, we can indeed further the cause of peace without forfeiting the blessing of freedom.<sup>6</sup>

It has become clear that the Soviet Union will feel totally secure and satisfied only when the entire world is, like its own populace, subjugated

under Soviet control. It has also become clear that the Soviets have built a military force that is awesome in its potential to coerce and intimidate (as well as wage war against) those who have neglected their defenses. The use of that capability by the Soviet Union, either for war or intimidation, must be deterred. If we and our allies would keep our freedom, we must also keep a credible deterrent, incorporating both capability and will.<sup>7</sup>

This year, our Congress is facing what may well be one of the sternest challenges it has had in recent years—the challenge of overcoming political partisanship and responsibly providing for America's defense needs as formally specified in the President's "more-guns-less-butter" budget for 1986. The President is asking the legislature to cut deeper into domestic spending than ever before to bring down the country's deficit while leaving defense spending essentially intact. Whether the Congress can overcome political partisanship and adequately provide the resources needed without delaying or deferring critical defense programs, remains to be seen. Experience has shown that there is only one thing to which lawmakers respond with a degree of thoroughness and alacrity: their respective constituency. That is precisely why public understanding and appreciation of the Soviet threat and our deterrent needs must be improved. Basic issues associated with defense have become so confused through linkage with deficit management and domestic programs, as well as by incorrect information, myths and misunderstandings, that constituency support is frequently fractured at best. As a result, congressmen are usually influenced more by their staffs and partisan political values than they are by independent understanding of defense issues.

It would be nice to believe that decision-making relevant to providing for our national survival was based on wide public support ("public" being defined as the people who voted in the past two presidential elections). The public has almost without exception given a president support when he was

acting in pursuit of established national goals. But if that public support turns out to be not based on broad popular consensus, but rather on the views of two editorial pages, two of three TV networks, four columnists, three congressional committee chairmen and two junior senators in charge of the War Powers Resolution, then that particular "public" is never going to support any defense program or military action short of outright invasion of the United States.<sup>8</sup>

#### PUBLIC CONFUSION

A safer world will not be realized simply through honorable intentions and good will. . . . No, the pursuit of fundamental goals our nation seeks in world affairs—peace, human rights, economic progress, national independence and international stability—requires a dedicated effort to support our friends and defend our interests.<sup>9</sup> Our commitment as peacemaker is focused on these goals.

The country is divided over the actual threat posed to us by the Soviet Union. A recent survey illustrates this division well. It showed thirty-five percent of the American public oppose the use of US troops if the Soviets were to invade Western Europe, and forty-nine percent of those polled oppose committing troops if the Soviets were to invade Japan. To project a conclusion from these findings means that the portion (more than one-third) of the American public which opposes the use of US forces overseas during wartime would probably also oppose the heavy funding of these same forces during peacetime.

There are three principal reasons for this opposition which seem to have strong support. First, based on our recent experiences in Vietnam, Lebanon and El Salvador, any military involvement may prove costly and futile. Second, Americans have shouldered the defense burdens of the free world for a long time. The West Europeans and the Japanese with their strong and competitive economies should provide for their own defense. Third, the foreign policy

goals and methods of the two superpowers are essentially the same, with both nations in competition and conflict about interests beyond the control and concern of the average American.

We may or may not agree with any or all of these attitudes. However, the fact remains that, given the widespread acceptance of one or more of these views, a defense budget request based on a weak, naive or confused understanding of the threat will meet with divided political support.<sup>13</sup>

A case in point is our current Strategic Defense Initiative. The "fog count" has thickened to the point of obscurity, and some real-world operational facts are in danger of being overlooked or ignored. As important as the SDI effort is, we cannot afford to let its long-range research and technology programs take on unwarranted operational dimensions. We must separate conceptual dreams, desires, and hopes from the immediate task of satisfying critical operational requirements in today's operational world.

For instance, during the intense ballistic missile defense debates of the mid-1960s, two-thirds of those citizens polled believed that the system then deployed afforded good protection. Of course, there was no system—there was no protection. That is the great danger for us regarding SDI—the inability of our people (and our allies) to separate the SDI technology programs seeking what might be—from the modernization programs for operational forces that are in being.

National decisions must not be made or swayed by the assertions of those who describe, in great detail, how our operational space defenses will work, how effective they will be, what they will replace, how much they will cost, and when we can have them up and running. Such conjecture should not even be repeated because it is sure to mislead people into thinking that we have, or soon can have—a comprehensive ballistic missile defense. The risk is that, if our national leadership is misled into this erroneous mindset, they will

fail to see the pressing operational requirement for such things as our strategic modernization program. There will be no MX, no B-1B, no D-5 missiles for our submarines, no small mobile ICBMs. And if we fail to do what we must, while we search for hopes and dreams, all too quickly we could find ourselves without arms control leverage, relevant deterrent strength or defenses.<sup>11</sup>

It is also disturbing how some of the "peace-at-any-price" movements are developing here and in Europe, which although well meant, are totally unrealistic and outright dangerous to the free world. To minimize the amount of effort and money being directed to building a strong US defense and modernizing our strategic forces is currently a popular aim, but in light of experience, a totally wrong way to proceed. Most of us recall how school yard bullies tackled only smaller, but never boys their own size. Similarly, history doesn't have many cases of one country attacking another when there existed in the minds of the aggressor, the slightest possibility of his perhaps not winning the conflict.

Further, it is doubtful that we would have dropped the atomic bomb on Japan if we had known that our enemy had similar weapons in his arsenal. It is also a historically based fact that the only way to ensure peace between the United States and the Soviet Union—regardless of Soviet leadership makeup—is a strong US defense equal to that of the Russians. Everyone hopes that the weapons we build to defend ourselves will never be used and ultimately scraped for obsolescence. Such a "deliberate waste of taxpayers' money" is very much cheaper than a single week of war with the Soviets. But to naively advocate a unilateral US freeze would guarantee conflict.<sup>12</sup>

Many Americans are also misinformed about US nuclear policy. A recent survey found that sixty-nine percent of those polled mistakenly said it is not current US policy to use nuclear weapons to resist a Soviet invasion of Europe or Japan with conventional forces. Virtually all Americans polled—eighty-one

percent—mistakenly believe it is our policy to use nuclear weapons, if, and only if, the Soviets attack the US first with nuclear weapons.<sup>13</sup>

The nations youth, its college students are also misinformed. The United States Army War College (USAWC) has a Current Affairs Panel, composed of USAWC students, which makes trips each year to visit student bodies at universities and colleges throughout the country. The purpose is to enhance understanding of national security on college campuses. The 1983-1984 academic year included visits to thirty-five campuses and an estimated 12,300 students, faculty members and community leaders during eleven trips.

All of the discussions in which the panel participated, revealed a general lack of understanding of the Soviet Union, its government, ideology and people. Most students were totally unfamiliar with how the Soviet people live, think and act and very few of the students and faculty had read much on the matter. There was general unawareness of the low living standard experienced by the Soviet populace, the oppressive nature of Soviet society or of the nation's economic stagnation. Most students and faculty had heard of the "godless society" created by Marxism-Leninism and had been taught that the ideology is evil. However, very few of them had any real knowledge of socialist/communist ideology, how it is applied and how Communist Party leaders use it in developing and implementing domestic and foreign policy. As a result, many of our educated populace simply have little basic understanding of who the Soviets are, why they react as they do regarding various international issues (e.g., emplacement of the Ground Launched Cruise Missile and Pershing II in Europe and the shooting-down of the Korean airliner), and the long-range objectives of Soviet leaders. Without such an understanding of our greatest potential adversary, young Americans become even more confused and frustrated with US foreign policy and defense-related decisions. This is particularly disturbing since it is these same Americans who will become, in a few years, our nation's

leadership responsible for developing and shaping our national defense and foreign policies.<sup>14</sup>

Further, as long as the US government is committed to the security and freedom of our people, confrontations with the Soviet Union are inevitable. That statement frequently upsets many Americans. Several of the candidates during last year's presidential primary season were clearly of the view that confrontations are not inevitable, that if the United States, as they see it, were to display greater reasonableness and a spirit of accommodation, arms control agreements would be quickly forthcoming and overall relations with the Soviet Union would improve.

These views are naive because they fail to take account of the history of Soviet behavior for almost seventy years. Confrontations with the Soviets cannot be avoided unless we are prepared to accept the Soviet agenda and act on it as they want us to do. In our dealings with the Soviets, we must always bear in mind that we are not dealing with a nation that shares our values. A nation that uses chemical weapons in Afghanistan, sponsors terrorist acts around the world, has organized its governmental system for subversive warfare abroad, and wages war against its own people to prevent the emergence of any trace of freedom,—is not a nation that can be expected to engage in civilized diplomacy.

There is little question that many Americans are psychologically and morally disarmed so that they don't support strong deterrence aimed at the Soviet Union. There has been a struggle for many decades to enlighten the American people as to the Soviet reality. During this same period, however, apologists for the Soviet Union have been at work in our country, sanitizing the Soviet image to prevent the American people, especially young college-educated people, from understanding the Soviet reality. These apologists



never give up in their belief that confrontation is not inevitable, that a most sincere commitment to peace and good will ultimately will produce a cooperative response from the Soviet Union. And they are prepared to make substantial concessions in terms of US national security in the hope of gaining that response.<sup>15</sup>

The Secretary of the Air Force recently had some comments on the subject.

Too many people in the United States want to apologize for America and have the philosophy, 'Kick America first.' Some would compare our liberation of the students in Grenada with the invasion of Afghanistan—'Kick America first.' Some would rather blame America for the deaths in Beirut than blame the terrorists who caused those deaths—'Blame America first.' Some, including the head of the government of one of our NATO allies, have accused the United States of sending KAL-007 as a spy plane over Soviet territory instead of blaming the Soviets for 200-plus needless deaths—'Kick America first.' And some would blame the (last) breakdown in the arms control negotiations on this country instead of on the Soviets who walked out—'Kick America first.'<sup>16</sup>

Finally, an authoritative pole shows that an overwhelming number of Americans believe defense spending to be three to four times what it actually is. Citizens believe, mistakenly, that spending on nuclear forces is at least twice what it really is and that there has been a substantial increase in both numbers and total destructiveness of our US nuclear weapons. In reality, both have declined substantially. A clear majority of those polled believe that America's military position in comparison to the Soviet Union's has stayed even over the past few years and that the threat of nuclear war is the same or diminished. This situation constitutes a lack of accurate, reliable public information.<sup>17</sup>

Since becoming a student with the US Army War College Class of 1985, I have participated in the school's Speakers Bureau which is an extension of its Public Affairs Office. Since August 1984, I have addressed numerous local civic, service and social organizations on the subject of National Defense.

Audiences have varied across a broad spectrum of backgrounds and professions. Based on responses during subsequent question and answer sessions, it is my impression that the public is: (1) literally hungry for information, (2) feels it does not have adequate or accurate data on basic defense issues, (3) is truly concerned about national survival but generally confused about how best to go about providing for the common defense, (4) is generally unaware of the extent of the Soviet threat, and (5) is very receptive to dialogue on all aspects of our defense programs. All of the audiences demonstrated some misunderstanding on several key issues; misunderstandings which must be cleared up if we ever hope to consolidate a strong consensus for providing the required resources for our future security. The following are some of the most commonly encountered misunderstandings and questions. (Answers are provided at Appendix A.)

1. Why must we spend more on defense when we already have enough to destroy the Soviet Union many times over?
2. Why are we spending so much on defense? Why can we not apply those resources to domestic programs?
3. Why can we not trust the Soviets? It is also in their best interests to have lower levels of nuclear weapons. Therefore, why so much emphasis on verification in arms control?
4. If the Russian people are just like us and do not want war any more than we do, why can we not have more confidence in their ability to sway their government in peaceful directions.
5. Is the Strategic Defense Initiative going to protect people or weapons? Is it also applicable to our allies?
6. Why are we militarizing space and developing anti-satellite (ASAT) weapons?

7. Even if arms control agreements are "flawed," is not the process itself, with its direct contact and exchange of views, of great value? Is it not better to talk than fight?
8. Would a strategic defensive system have to be able to stop one hundred percent of Soviet weapons to be considered effective?
9. Why do we need the Peacekeeper (MX) missile if it will not be any more survivable than current Minuteman ICBMs when placed in the same silos? Doesn't it make more sense to put them on more survivable submarines—or not deploy then now and wait until the follow-on generation of Small-Mobile ICBMs which will be available in the 1990s?
10. Isn't a bad arms control agreement preferable to no agreement?
11. Does no arms control agreement mean massive expenditures for strategic programs?
12. Is not arms control necessary to stop the arms race?

#### DISPELLING MISUNDERSTANDING

The task of keeping all of our citizens properly informed on matters concerning national security, preserving the peace, and deterring war is crucial. We have long been concerned with correcting distorted public impressions, whether inadvertent or deliberate, concerning the role and responsibility of our country's military forces. The Vietnam era, and extensive media reporting associated with it, exacerbated this problem and left lasting scars on our democratic society and military community.<sup>18</sup>

Public support is clearly essential for the success of any national security policy. The current American mood toward foreign affairs remains unstable at best, alternating between extremes of pessimism and over reacting to events. The postwar consensus on foreign policy eroded with Vietnam, and has yet to be reforged. However, as Vietnam recedes in the public memory,

public confidence is returning and with it a greater willingness to see the United States again function as a major power. But that self-confidence is still fragile and may not survive a major test of will and endurance in any situation in which the American public does not clearly perceive a challenge to the nation's vital interests. Public confidence is neither built nor maintained by policies based on practical politics. If a clearly "good" cause does not exist, or if victory is neither pursued nor attainable, public support for a policy will quickly vanish. This fact places substantial constraints on the US leadership. Additionally, America's interests around the world involve global responsibilities, the maintenance of which is exceedingly difficult to justify to much of the American electorate and their elected representatives.<sup>19</sup>

Public opinion is not usually a spontaneous expression of the "people's will." It is rather a reaction to selective information provided by institutions or individuals, often with contradictory purposes. Further, the public is often highly diverse. The views of opinion leaders are frequently at variance with those of the mass public. And although public opinion samplings will differ with circumstances, the administration cannot long ignore the views of opinion leaders who control the mass media, particularly television, which provides the bulk of political information to most of the people.

Congress is especially sensitive to public opinion. The morning paper and television news, the latest public opinion poll and the hometown press coverage of national and world issues (as well as their own activities) are watched extremely closely by legislators, especially those who must seek reelection every two years. Constituent mail and other communications from important individuals and groups receive priority attention from an experienced legislator. Consequently, if a strong current of opinion is building "back home," the Congress will respond in Washington.<sup>20</sup>

Unfortunately, not many important national security issues lend themselves to the kind of short treatment typified by evening news shows. The consequence is that, while the public at large has more information than ever before, it may not be appreciably better informed about national security matters. As a matter of fact, if there is a press or television bias on some matter, as has been documented on various issues, the public may actually be less objectively informed about many key issues.

We need to further increase our efforts to tell the full and unbiased story of the Soviet threat to the American public. Media attention to this subject, for the foreseeable future, is not likely to increase but rather limit attention to selected defense issues. This is why the Department of Defense, . . . as manager of the nation's defense program, in general, and the military services specifically, must get more directly involved in effectively articulating national security needs to the public. This responsibility is already contained within the framework of established DOD policy.

#### HOW TO PROCEED: A POSSIBLE APPROACH

The roots of public attitudes and opinions are in the local community. People live and work and form their opinions and vote on issues that concern them in their communities. What eventually become the policies and actions of a national government are formed at the local community level.<sup>21</sup>

In discussion with Secretary of the Air Force Public Affairs (SAF/PA) personnel on 24 January 1985, it was suggested that one approach for straightening out the misunderstandings of defense issues previously discussed and effectively explaining the seriousness of the Soviet threat would be to increase contacts of military personnel with the public at the grassroots level. This could be accomplished by placing more Major Command (MAJCOM) emphasis on voluntary public speaking by military personnel in communities

surrounding Air Force Bases. Air Force Regulation (AFR) 190-1 encourages such contact and recommends that base Public Affairs Offices (PAOs) establish voluntary programs (Speakers Bureaus) for this purpose. During the course of that discussion, it was suggested that such increased contact with the public, could possibly be construed as being inconsistent with Congressional legislation prohibiting lobbying by the military.<sup>22</sup>

Subsequent research of this issue revealed that the general prohibitions against military lobbying are contained in two pieces of legislation. The first, Article 18, US Code, Section 1913, was aimed at preventing direct executive agency intercession with members of Congress concerning matters before the Congress. The statute failed to address another route by which influence might be exerted--through a grassroots appeal to the public. The Congress rectified that shortcoming in 1979 with Public Law 96-74 which holds that:

no part of any appropriation contained in this or any other act, or the funds available for expenditure by any corporation or agency, shall be used for publicity or propaganda purposes designed to support or defeat legislation pending before the Congress (Section 607(a) of the statute).

Further, both the Congressional Research Office and the General Accounting Office have become involved over the years with the objective of establishing the legislative history on the matter. Their conclusions were that the intent of the legislation was to prohibit lobbying activities by executive agencies.<sup>23</sup> The dispelling of public misunderstandings and myths concerning defense and the accurate articulation of the Soviet threat by military members clearly does not fall within the purview of lobbying or this specific legislation.

Increased public speaking by Air Force personnel in local base communities would fit perfectly within the existing framework of Community Relations policy already implemented under AFR 190-1, thus requiring no new policy

formulation, little development of new material, and minimal resource expenditure. Additionally, while this suggested approach is probably applicable to all services, the author focused on the Air Force Public Relations program due to personal familiarity.

Over the years, the Secretary of the Air Force Public Affairs Office has developed a very strong Community Relations Program which has among its objectives the goals of:

. . . increasing public awareness and understanding of the armed forces and the mission, policies and programs of the Air Force . . . (as well as) maintaining a reputation as a respected professional organization charged with part of the responsibility for national security.<sup>24</sup>

Clearly, articulation of the Soviet threat and increasing public awareness of defense issues, fall within the sphere of these objectives. For this purpose, SAF/PA has developed and distributed to the MAJCOMs some excellent materials (e.g., Soviet threat briefing slides and scripts, copies of speeches by Department of Defense leaders, Air Force Policy Letters for Commanders, background papers on important defense issues, etc.). In many instances, these materials have been further reproduced and augmented at the MAJCOM, Numbered Air Force (NAF) and local levels. They are kept up-to-date and made available to personnel volunteering to speak in local communities. The problem is not with the sufficiency of briefing aids, or the quality of people participating in public speaking engagements, but rather the limited extent to which it is practiced and the associated subject matter. For example, a recent telephone survey of Public Affairs Offices (PAOs) at eighteen Air Force Bases in the Continental United States (CONUS) revealed the following:

- o All eighteen operated voluntary Speakers Bureaus.
- o The average number of volunteer speakers on the roles at each base was thirty-five.

- o The average number of public speaking engagements by base personnel during 1984 was forty.
- o The average of those engagements dealing with national defense issues or the Soviet threat was less than ten percent. (Most dealt with unit/mission familiarization or other subjects.)
- o With the exception of two installations, none of the Public Affairs Offices actively solicited public speaking opportunities for their volunteers (i.e., they waited for a request then responded).
- o Fifteen of the eighteen surveyed thought they could develop more speaking opportunities through increased formal and informal solicitation within their respective communities and would not have difficulty finding more volunteer speakers if necessary.
- o Only one installation indicated ever experiencing a backlog of speaker requests! (Note: This same unit aggressively pursued (formally) speaking opportunities within the community.)
- o All eighteen PAOs had current files of Aerospace Speeches, Air Force Policy Letters for Commanders, background papers on major defense issues and all had some variant of audiovisual material pertaining to the Soviet Threat.
- o Eleven PAOs indicated a preference of many of their volunteer speakers to present only unit/mission type briefings to avoid becoming involved with complex defense issues they felt ill-prepared to discuss.<sup>25</sup>

Clearly, what is needed is emphasis on increased frequency of speaking engagements with a focus on those issues and national security threats for which we need a general public consensus. AFR 190-1 clearly puts responsibility for the success of individual public affairs programs on the shoulders



of the installation commander.<sup>26</sup> Of the bases surveyed, all indicated strong backing by the commander for their respective programs regardless of how they were structured or carried out. What is now needed is renewed policy/guidance from the Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF) and SAF/PA to MAJCOMs (for implementation through local commanders) placing increased emphasis on aggressive PAO solicitation of public speaking opportunities, encouragement of greater voluntary participation, and adoption of "National Security Needs and Issues" as a central theme.

Also necessary is renewed emphasis on the military officer's professional responsibility for being well informed and an effective communicator of defense requirements. Our situation as officers is very similar to that of physicians, attorneys and other professionals. We have a personal responsibility to stay current on developments in our profession through self-study. Each of us has a professional obligation to follow debates of key defense issues and not shy away from articulating their essential elements in support of accurate public understanding and development of consensus concerning our security needs. This responsibility should also receive renewed emphasis not only within the framework of the Air Force Professional Military Education structure, but as an item of major MAJCOM interest during inspection activities.

Further, we should use this approved and established tool more in support of our future national security.

Official public appearances and speeches by the Air Force personnel, military or civilian, constitute essential parts of the Air Force program to keep the public informed. Individual members of the Air Force . . . should make every effort to fill requests unless overriding or previous official commitments preclude acceptance. Air Force personnel are authorized and encouraged to make official public appearances or speeches. . . .<sup>27</sup>

For this purpose, the following specific actions are suggested for adoption.

- o Transmittal of a SAF/PA-developed Secretary of the Air Force letter to the Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF), calling for renewed effort at the public grassroots level by Air Force military and civilian personnel to assist in the clear explanation of the Soviet Threat and defense needs as well as the dispelling of myths and misunderstandings concerning national security.
- o Transmittal of a CSAF letter to commanders of MAJCOMs and Separate Operating Agencies (SOAs) requesting:
  - oo Increased emphasis on public speaking by Air Force military and civilian personnel at the installation level.
  - oo Active solicitation of increased speaking opportunities by local Public Affairs Offices.
  - ooo Formal transmittal of PAO developed letters to community/regional organizations (e.g., civic, social, educational, professional, etc.) expressing the installation's willingness to provide speakers (consistent with AFR 190-1 criteria) for specified national defense/Soviet Threat related subjects.
  - ooo Prompt formal and informal PAO follow-up on same.
  - oo Greater emphasis on voluntary participation in local Speakers Bureau Programs.
  - oo Renewed emphasis on personal and professional responsibility of military personnel to stay well informed on national security matters and engage in public articulation of the defense program.
  - oo Establishment of increased installation-level public speaking as a MAJCOM/SOA Special Interest Item.

- oo MAJCOM/SOA follow-up and evaluation through respective Inspector General activities.
- o Transmittal of a CSAF letter to the Commander, Air University requesting renewed circular emphasis on professional responsibility for public speaking at all levels of Air Force Professional Military Education.
- o SAF/PA actions necessary for implementing increased public speaking activity:
  - oo Provision of procedural instructions to MAJCOMS/SOAs for implementation at PAO level.
  - oo Development (in collaboration with MAJCOMS/SOAs) of methods, criteria and instructions for sampling/measuring public awareness of national defense needs at local level.
  - oo Expand, as required, established PAO-thru-SAF/PA reporting requirements and procedures to ensure adequate Air Staff/Secretariat level monitoring.
  - oo Work with MAJCOMS/SOAs to identify initial and recurring audio-visual support requirements/procedures/costs. (Most units surveyed already had some variant of Soviet Threat material, although outdated.)
  - oo Work with AF/ACB and AF/ACX to develop an associated funding strategy.
  - oo Refine/modify as necessary AFR 190-1 to support an expanded program.
  - oo Work with the Secretary of the Air Force Staff Judge Advocate (SAF/JA), to ensure legal consistency with established public law and DOD policy.

- oo Work with the Secretary of the Air Force for Legislative Liaison (SAF/LL) to coordinate introduction of the subject of increased Air Force public speaking activity to the Congress.
- oo Develop plans/procedures for closely coordinating the expanded speaking program with the media and incorporate into AFR 190-1 as applicable. (Although some initial adverse coverage of the Air Force effort could possibly occur, this would probably be outweighed by the long-term benefits of increased media involvement/support at the local level. However, a formal plan should also be developed to minimize the potential initial adverse coverage.)
- oo Closely coordinate with Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs (OASD/PA) to ensure consistency with established DOD policy and facilitate possible application of the more beneficial features of the Air Force's expanded effort (once demonstrated, measured and validated) DOD-wide.

The preceding actions provide a possible approach for increasing public awareness of defense needs and clearing up misunderstanding and national security issues over the long haul. It is a relatively low cost, low risk means of doing something now within the framework of established DOD and Air Force policy as well as public law, and is suggested for serious consideration.

The nation's continued strength and survival are dependent upon the support of its citizens. The extent of that support is in turn a product of clear and timely public understanding of defense issues. The uniformed military personnel can help by effectively articulating defense needs publicly on

every available occasion. Public understanding is the key to our nation remaining responsive to future security threats.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Boyd W. Gilbert".

Boyd W. Gilbert, LTC, USAF  
US Army War College  
Class of 1985

## APPENDIX A

### MOST COMMONLY ENCOUNTERED QUESTIONS

1. Why must we spend more on defense when we already have enough to destroy the Soviet Union many times over?

Many think that we do not have to modernize or add to our existing strength because they think the United States and the USSR are equally able to destroy each other. This is counter to factual data relative to significant growth of Soviet strategic forces since the early 1970s. This data indicates that if we do not modernize our own strategic systems, our deterrent capability will seriously erode in the face of Soviet expansion in this area. The Soviet Union, if permitted to continue its one-nation arms race without any response on our part, would soon be in a position to threaten, or actually attack us, with the assurance that we would be unable to respond. We have seen (through acts of aggression such as Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Afghanistan) that the USSR does not hesitate to take advantage of weaker adversaries. We must not permit the Soviets to think they could start a nuclear war with us, and that we would lack the capability for successful retaliation. Our plans for modernizing our strategic nuclear forces have given the Soviet Union an incentive to negotiate reductions in such forces. However, just beginning arms control negotiations will not yield the results we desire (i.e., substantially reduced levels of weapons) unless the Soviets have an incentive to reach agreements. This is why we must continue our efforts to restore our defenses.<sup>28</sup>

2. Why are we spending so much on defense? Why can we not apply those resources to domestic programs?

The Soviets dedicate approximately 15 percent of their Gross National Product (GNP) annually to their military and they outproduce us in almost

every category of weapons. By contrast, during the 1970s, US defense spending dropped almost 20 percent in real terms, the defense share of the Gross National Product declined to less than 6 percent and spending for the Air Force alone dropped almost 25 percent. The result was a dangerous shift in the military balance and a growing perception at home and abroad that the United States was a nation on the decline, unable to protect its citizens or interests in the face of a growing military threat. However, since 1980 we have been working hard to redress the neglect and underfunding of the last decade and have made very good progress in restoring the country's defense posture.

Additionally, since 1970 growth in real nondefense spending, including federal nondefense and state and local governments, has consistently outpaced growth in defense spending. Even during the latter part of the decade when defense spending began to increase slightly, growth in nondefense spending remained higher. It has only been in the past four years that defense spending has grown more than nondefense spending. Still, even with this modest growth, average growth in defense spending for the period 1970 to 1983 was only 3 percent compared to 106 percent for federal nondefense and 32 percent for state and local.

Further, during the past few years it has been popular for critics of the defense program to argue that increased defense budgets mean weaker economic growth, fewer jobs and higher inflation. Were this to be true, it would be difficult to explain why the nation enjoyed such prosperity during the 1960s when defense spending was higher than it is today (both in the federal budget and as a share of the GNP). Also, were this premise to be correct, it would be equally difficult to explain why there was no corresponding boom during the 1970s when defense spending had dropped 20 percent.

Finally, many people simply do not realize that in terms of total government spending, we are actually spending less today on defense than we did during the early 1960s when the defense share of the Gross National Product was more than 9 percent. Before that, in the 1950s, we were spending 10 to 11 percent of the GNP on defense. Today it is less than 7 percent.<sup>29</sup>

3. Why can we not trust the Soviets? It is also in their best interests to have lower levels of nuclear weapons. Therefore, why so much emphasis on verification in arms control?

Even excluding the Soviet violations of the SALT I and II accords recently disclosed by the Administration at Congressional request, the Soviets have violated nearly every treaty since the founding of the Soviet State in 1922. As Lenin, the founding father and patron saint of the Soviet Union said in setting policy on treaties:

Promises are like pie crust; made to be broken.<sup>30</sup>

They have followed his advice; from the League of Nations through the Geneva Convention, through the Atlantic Charter, Yalta, Potsdam, the Four-Power Agreement on Berlin, the United Nations Charter, the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, and the Helsinki Human Rights Agreement, as well as SALT I and II. The several treaties they broke in their invasions of Finland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Afghanistan, as well as their use of chemical weapons there and in Laos and Cambodia, revolted the world. The Soviets did adhere to one treaty scrupulously: their secret pact with Hitler to invade Poland in 1939. Of course, that treaty violated a previous nonaggression pact with Poland, so perhaps we can call that a wash.<sup>31</sup>

4. If the Russian people are just like us and do not want war any more than we do, why can we not have more confidence in their ability to sway their government in peaceful directions.

The Soviet people are not just like us. Although most Soviet citizens and leaders do not want war, the similarities end there. The Soviets believe that their actions are morally justified if they help the cause of



communism. Their moral system is absolutely counter to our definition of the word "moral." It is our view that policy is moral if it advances certain principles and unalienable rights—life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. However, the differences don't end there. Our decision makers are held accountable to the scrutiny of public debate, the press, Congress and the will of the electorate. In the Soviet Union, a very few men make policy without any chance for public challenge or influence. The Soviets also view defense differently than we do. They accept competition with the West as inevitable. They believe this involves military competition which may lead to warfare and are determined to win any conflict which might arise.<sup>32</sup>

Further, the Russian people themselves are quite different than us. The whole of Soviet society is militarized to a degree which Westerners find hard to believe. From his earliest days, a Soviet child is taught about the glory of Russian and Soviet feats of arms. Upon entering school, military-patriotic themes are regularly taught. Soviet children begin playing military games in elementary school; formal military training is compulsory from the ninth grade on; high school boys go to military school every summer; and at 18 they face a universal draft. This background of militarism, combined with all-encompassing state control over personal lives, makes the stake each Soviet citizen has in not offending the state very high. Consequently, dissent or public opinion within the Soviet Union to change government policies is, for all practical purposes, nonexistent.<sup>33</sup>

5. Is the Strategic Defense Initiative going to protect people or weapons?  
Is it also applicable to our allies?

Accomplishment of both tasks is essential to the ultimate goal, which is to provide security for the people of the United States and our allies. The immediate objective is to conduct research on technologies which might enable the development of defensive systems capable of intercepting

ballistic missiles after they have been launched and preventing them from hitting their targets.

Once proven, these technologies could be used for the design and development of an appropriate system of defenses. The defenses envisioned have three attributes which would contribute to the ultimate objective. First, and most important, an effective defense against ballistic missiles would improve stability and reduce the likelihood of war by eliminating the ability of ballistic missiles to support preemptive nuclear strikes. Second, in the unlikely event—whether planned or accidental—that nuclear weapons were used in the face of effective ballistic missile and other defenses, such defenses would save lives and limit damage. Third, by reducing the value of offensive nuclear forces, both military and economic incentives could be developed for negotiated offensive force reductions.<sup>34</sup>

There is also reason to believe that the same technologies utilized in destroying short-range ballistic missiles could be applicable as well to missiles with shorter flight times, such as the Soviet SS-20s deployed in Europe against NATO or cruise missiles. Consequently, we are working closely with our allies to ensure that such defensive capabilities, as they are developed, will be available there as well.<sup>35</sup>

6. Why are we militarizing space and developing anti-satellite (ASAT) weapons?

It is a false notion that space is some peaceful sanctuary free from military activity. Both the United States and the Soviet Union depend on space to support military operations and have had military satellites since the early 1960s. Over seventy percent of our long-haul military communications are handled by satellites. We can obtain early warning of missiles fired against us only because we have the Satellite Early Warning System. Our military weather satellites provide important data to all services. The

Global Positioning System, when fully operational, will enable us to navigate worldwide with unprecedented accuracy.

The Soviets perform these missions as well. But they also have satellites designed to perform naval surveillance and targeting missions. These satellites are strictly military systems, intended to support Soviet naval operations against our large surface ships and ship formations. Space, therefore, is already an area of military operations.

The Soviets have already developed an anti-satellite weapon system that is capable of attacking satellites in near-Earth orbits. Recent Soviet proposals to ban all ASAT tests and future deployments are misleading and intended to put the United States at a disadvantage. If we are to truly deter attacks on our satellites, we need a capability which puts their satellites at risk, just as they do ours. It is important to note that the treaty proposed by the Soviets did not prevent developing and deploying advanced ground-based weapons, such as high-energy lasers, which could be used in an anti-satellite role. This is an area in which the Soviets have invested a great amount of effort and resources.<sup>36</sup>

7. Even if arms control agreements are "flawed," is not the process itself, with its direct contact and exchange of views, of great value? Is it not better to talk than fight?

Not necessarily. The development of military forces can be an expression of a nation's concern for the preservation of its freedom. Arms control is not an end in itself. The process offers little hope for benefit when the parties bring divergent views to the table.

It is interesting how Western democracies, even when they understand that they are confronting a serious adversary, observe concrete evidence of their adversary's military preparation whose purpose can only be intimidation and aggression, and yet rationalize all this away. However, such self-delusion is perhaps understood when the consequences of facing reality require hard

sacrifice and courageous political leadership. How much easier it is to protect an image of a brighter future free of these burdens.

To our way of thinking, international conferences and negotiations are so completely a means of ending conflict that we are blind to the fact that they may be and (in the hands of experts) are equally adopted to, continuing it.<sup>37</sup>

8. Would a strategic defensive system have to be able to stop one hundred percent of Soviet weapons to be considered effective?

The goal is to change the state of mind of the Soviet leadership. Success of a given system is measured by how decreased effectiveness is viewed by the Soviet leadership. Even if only fifty percent of the missiles would be prevented from reaching their targets, Soviet leaders would surely find it not in their interests to attack in the first place.<sup>38</sup>

9. Why do we need the Peacekeeper (MX) missile if it will not be any more survivable than current Minuteman ICBMs when placed in the same silos? Doesn't it make more sense to put them on more survivable submarines—or not deploy them now and wait until the follow-on generation of the Small-Mobile ICBM which will be available in the 1990s?

To ensure that any Soviet first-strike against our strategic nuclear forces would not prevent us from retaliating effectively, the United States needs a strong triad of forces. Land-based ballistic missiles that are more effective against Soviet hard targets than our current Minuteman ICBMs are an essential element of these forces. The three-stage Peacekeeper (MX) ICBM will carry ten independently targetable warheads that have greater accuracy than the present Minuteman system. Its greater resistance to nuclear effects and its advanced guidance system provide a better capability to place at risk the most highly valued Soviet targets, thereby improving deterrence. The Peacekeeper is needed now to (1) redress a US/Soviet imbalance in hard target kill capability, (2) demonstrate US resolve to maintain a strong deterrent, (3) provide

incentive for meaningful arms control negotiations, and (4) modernize a portion of our aging ICBM force.

While putting Peacekeeper in silos will not increase the survivability of each individual Peacekeeper over each individual Minuteman, we should not place undue emphasis on the survivability of each individual system as if it faced the threat from Soviet forces independently. Our bombers, sea-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) and ICBMs are much more survivable together against Soviet attack than would be any of the systems alone. The strategic forces should be assessed collectively and not in isolation.

Additionally, our most modern SLBM (Poseidon C-4) was developed in late 1979. Such missiles cannot, however, adequately hold Soviet super-hard targets at risk. Peacekeeper is the only system that can address these deficiencies prior to 1989. While the Trident II D-5 will be a very effective addition to our strategic forces, it lacks a number of capabilities inherent in land-based missiles. Land-based missiles have the best command and control, the highest alert rates, the lowest daily operating expenses and fastest response capability. Land-based ICBMs also provide a hedge against an enemy developing the sophisticated detection needed to locate a submarine and destroy it. Moreover, we need to preserve a triad of forces, not only to enhance their survival, but to complicate Soviet planning and require them to expend more resources.<sup>39</sup>

10. Isn't a bad arms control agreement preferable to no agreement?

No. Unsound arms control not only makes it more difficult to provide for our security, but actually increases the ultimate danger of war. In contrast, failure to sign a bad agreement today could be, indeed, the only path to a sound agreement tomorrow. The United States does not have to apologize for insisting on solidly based agreements, which significantly enhance strategic stability and are absolutely equitable. Given the massive

Soviet buildup, this probably will require large Soviet reductions, especially in missile throw-weight, and such Soviet concessions are not highly probable.

11. Does no arms control agreement mean massive expenditures for strategic programs?

First, strategic programs never absorbed massive amounts of the defense budget; at the highest, ten to twelve percent. The sums are well within the capability of a nation with a more than a three trillion dollar Gross National Product. Second, only such strategic programs will persuade the Soviet Union to engage in serious negotiations. If we are unwilling, or only threaten, to develop strategic programs necessary for our security, there will be no basis for eventually negotiating sound arms control agreements with the Soviet Union. The sooner we recognize this reality, the better off and more secure we will be.<sup>40</sup>

12. Is not arms control necessary to stop the arms race?

No, for in no real sense has there been an arms race as far as the United States is concerned. Since the early 1970s, the Soviets have outspent us by more than five hundred billion dollars and the gap in 1981 alone was about seventy billion dollars. Soviet spending on strategic nuclear forces during the last ten years was nearly twice ours, and they are investing substantially more on space.<sup>41</sup>

The number of US nuclear weapons has also been declining rapidly. We have over eight thousand fewer warheads today than in the 1960s, and only one-fourth the megatonnage. This has been the result of modernization designed to put safer, more effective weapons in the inventory. It is not the product of agreements with the Soviet Union.

A US government study commissioned in the late 1970s compared 41 categories of current nuclear capabilities (e.g., warhead numbers, megatonnage, delivery systems, etc.) consistent with the situation in 1962 (the Cuban

missile crisis period). The study found that the United States was significantly ahead in every category in 1962 and behind in all but two by the late 1970s. Even with the increased emphasis on defense since 1980, this condition remains essentially unchanged today.<sup>42</sup> :

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